

BRAC Advisory Group Meeting

November 18, 2009

7pm – 9pm

Burke Library

Roll Call –

Present:

John Komoroske, Chairman of the Planning Commission
Jim Turkel, Chief, Belvoir Integration Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jerry Dawson, Duke Realty
Geoffrey Goodale – Vice Chair, Brookville-Seminary Valley
Dick Somers, Seminary Park Community Association
Dave Dexter - Chair, Seminary West
Kathy Burns, West End Business Association
Don Buch, Citizen at Large
Nancy Jennings, Seminary Hill
Dave Cavanaugh, Seminary Ridge
Ronald Sturman, Seminary Heights
Kai Reynolds, JBG
Stephanie Landrum, AEDP

Not Present:

Colonel Moffatt, Fort Belvoir Deputy Garrison Commander for Transformation and BRAC
Jayme Blakesley, Alexandria Transportation Commission
Julie Edelson, Lincolnia Hills/Heywood Glen
Mark Benedict, Parkside of Alexandria

Elected Officials:

Kerry Donely, Vice Mayor
Rob Krupicka, Councilmen
Paul Smedberg, Councilmen

City Staff:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Jeff Farner, Deputy Planning & Zoning, Urban Design
Tom Canfield, City Architect
Bob Garbacz, Acting Deputy, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
Pat Escher, Principal Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning

VDOT

Ronaldo T. “Nic” Nicholson, VDOT Regional Transportation Director for the Northern Virginia Megaprojects

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1. Roll Call
2. Approval of October minutes
3. Announcement that there are pending intersection improvements for the intersection of King Street and Beauregard Street. The group requests the Lisa Jaatinen, the project manager, attend a future meeting to discuss these improvements.
4. Congress has passed an amendment to provide an additional \$450,000 dollars to the MilCon/ VA Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010 to review impacts of the BRAC relocations on transportation/traffic.
5. Stephanie Landrum with Alexandria Economic Development Partnership gave an update on the BRAC Coordinator position. Stephanie is acting coordinator until the position is filled. The position works with the neighboring jurisdictions to keep up to date with BRAC issues. While this group is focused on the Mark Center, she is focused on the entire City and the loss of 7,200 jobs and leased commercial space. The BRAC Coordinator is funded by the Department of Defense.
6. Bob Garbacz, Dave Dexter and Dick Somers gave an update about the November 10th City Council meeting where Council approved the Mark Center Road improvements. The City will hold a west end community meeting in January or February to discuss these improvements, construction schedule and any other pertinent information.

Important Dates – Nov. 21 – VDOT to present IJR to Council
 Dec 2 – Transportation Commission to Address IJR
 Dec 8 – Council – NCPC recommendation
 Dec 12 – Council to make recommendation about access to the site
 Jan 7 – NCPC

Can the Seminary Road improvements be mentioned for informational purposes only at the public meeting on the 21st?

Pat Escher will send out comprehensive list of dates for all the different reviews/actions to take place in the coming months.

7. VDOT – Nick Nicholson – gave an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) update – VDOT will start there modeling on two alternatives soon – this does not preclude any

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alternatives that may be presented to VDOT from this group or from Council. VDOT will then have to go through a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, after the NEPA process is done – approximately 1 yr - a determination of which, if any, alternative will be designed and constructed. Concern was discussed by the group that VDOT should hold off starting their modeling until they have received Council recommendation. Nick indicated that they are starting the process pursuant to the groups request to expedite VDOT's review and commencing with the review would not preclude any alternative options that may arise from this process. VDOT is taking formal and informal comments from all different stakeholders. In mid-January there will be a public meeting to discuss the alternatives. Jodi Smolik, Director of the Winkler Preserve expressed strong opposition to any of the alternatives that would impact the preserve. Kerry Donely believes the group needs in writing that VDOT will take alternative suggestions that result from the group and/or Council into consideration. Council will be making a determination at their December 12th meeting. The scope of the IJR is strictly direct access to the Mark Center as requested by the Mayor Eullie back in the spring of this year. If the Seminary Road and I-395 interchange were to be brought into the process, the direct access study would stop and considering the amount of pending projects already in the VDOT pipeline, the interchange improvements would not go forward for a very long time. The City's Transportation and Environmental Services Department has look at the VHB report and wanted to get feed back from the community. The VHB report did look at direct access, but the alternative was in a different location, with different challenges.

8. Letter to Council – What should be in the letter?

Geoffrey Goodale discussed the letter from the Brookville-Seminary Valley. This letter stated that none of the proposed alternatives were satisfactory as the first three did not adequately remove enough BRAC traffic and the other four had direct impact to the Winkler Preserve and /or sound walls.

Dave Cavanaugh stated that we need to be not looking at just the road improvements; we need to be looking at transit, TMP and alternate modes to get people to and from the site.

Jim Turkel - When the Army purchased the property, they thought all that was necessary would be the road improvements, now they have paid for a traffic study and will be doing a TMP. The Army is not supporting any of the VDOT alternatives; they are just following the process.

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There will be 6,400 employees and approximately 3,900 vehicles on site. The TMP will accommodate all those employees who will not have parking or 40%. The triple left and double left will help to alleviate, but not solve the traffic congestion. The Army does think direct access is good – even if it only services a portion of the WHS site. The southern garage is being design to accommodate a future direct access ramp.

Kerry – What are the guiding principles that will guide the decision makers to a recommendation? The Seminary interchange is constrained – so would one principle be that the improvements no further impact this interchange? Would another principle be that the alternatives work with the existing and proposed TMPs. Currently this area lacks HOV access, shuttle amenities, and other transit oriented design elements. Other principles might be;

- a. For the design to serve the entire Mark Center site – not just BRAC;
- b. That it should be the most efficient design, not the less expensive;
- c. Or that disturbance to the preserve should be minimized or there should be no disturbance to the preserve.

Owen Curtis agrees with the Vice Mayor – the improvements need to bring people to the neighborhood efficiently, the TMPs need to succeed, connecting people to HOV and other transit amenities. Whether it is HOV or HOT doesn't matter. HOV is vital to the neighborhood and the region.

Duke and the Army are not driving the direct access they are just facilitating and participating in the process. Both agree that HOV to the site would be great.

Guiding Principles

1. HOV Access;
2. Reduce traffic impact on Seminary Road Interchange;
3. Direct access to the entire site;
4. Protect the preserve;
5. The City should urgently work to develop and implement solutions to the current and projected traffic problems on Seminary Road from George Mason to Beauregard (as documented in the VHB report). This should involve working closely with VDOT, Fairfax County, and Arlington County and also consider the Route 7/King Street corridor from Skyline to 395 rather than just Seminary Road;
6. Transit alternatives should work with existing and proposed TMPs;
7. Should be an efficient design, not the least expensive; and
8. Federal Government should pay for the improvements.

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Rob Krupicka – The solution should be integrated with the City' approved transportation master plan.

The group's letter needs to be submitted to the City by November 30 to be presented to the Transportation Commission on December 2nd.

9. Beauregard SAP Update – Pat Escher explained that Pat Man was not in attendance and she would give a brief update. The plan had its first kick off meeting two weeks ago – the City has a consultant on board but she does not know the specifics – she will find out and get back to the group. The SAP's boundary is relating to the land use portion of the plan; the transportation/traffic analysis will expand beyond those boundaries. While the plan will review redevelopment potential, it will have a large emphasis on infrastructure, reviewing water, sewer, schools, etc. The next public meeting will be after the holidays in January.
10. Jeff Farner's presentation regarding the NCPC. As Pat Escher was assisting with the presentation – notes are not detailed. Refer to P&Z web page for the presentation. Staff has worked with the Army and Duke Realty to refine all of the buildings' architecture, the office building, the north parking garage, and remote inspection facility. The site circulation was improved by incorporating a loop road around the north parking garage. The city is requesting additional landscaping to provide screening. Delivery trucks will be using City roads to access the site.
11. Community Discussion –
A question was raised to inquire if all the bright lighting in the structure under construction necessary? Can the building be LEED-certified if so much energy is going into what seems to the casual observer to be unnecessary lighting?

Owen Curtis - There has been a history of focused transportation studies in the Mark Center area, and a lack of comprehensive reviews. Each sponsoring party has tried to contain the focus onto issues of their responsibility – the developers (Winkler originally, now Duke) prefer to not spend any more on studies or improvements than they are required to, and the City and VDOT each have different portions of the roadway system which are of their greatest interest. The results from each of these more focused studies have been therefore misleading in that they do not take into account the bigger picture. The more recent studies (by Parsons Brinkerhoff and VHB) made it clear that the original 2004 study which led to the approval of the development plan with only the triple and dual lefts required to meet the traffic needs was not a broad enough study. So that now everyone is aware that narrowly focused studies have led to the situation where the

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collective impact of the Army and other traffic on the general area of Mark Center cannot be accommodated by the planned infrastructure. The IJR study, while well intended to address the most significant aspect of the inadequate infrastructure will only continue the trend of looking at the issue too narrowly. Moreover, it runs the risk that the IJR recommendation and what is implemented as a result may prove to conflict later with whatever broader solution is necessary for the Mark Center area. To avoid this, in parallel to the IJR and other planning/design efforts, some agency needs to take on a more comprehensive, multimodal study of how to make the transportation system in the Mark Center area work in the mid- to longer run. The City would be the preferred lead agency, as the City has the responsibility to its neighborhoods and communities to preserve their quality of life, and provide the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the development which the City is in charge of approving. While the IJR process is underway, there still is time to do the more comprehensive study to ensure that whatever answer goes to implementation fits into the bigger picture. A number of the guiding principles which the BRAC Advisory Group enumerated last evening – let's emphasize HOV and transit, let's serve more than just the BRAC site, etc. – are also applicable to the broader study, and can help us formulate the community's desires which the broader study can address.

Request to have staff look at the synchronization of traffic lights.

12. Meeting was adjointed.
13. Next meeting December 16th – Burke Library